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Overview of the People CMM

2.1 Organizational Maturity

The People CMM is an organizational change model. It is designed on the premise that improved workforce practices will not survive unless an organization's behavior changes to support them. The People CMM provides a roadmap for transforming an organization by steadily improving its workforce practices. As do all Capability Maturity Models, the People CMM consists of five maturity levels, or evolutionary stages, through which an organization's workforce practices and processes evolve. At each maturity level, a new system of practices is added to those implemented at earlier levels. Each overlay of practices raises the level of sophistication through which the organization develops its workforce. Within this environment individuals experience greater opportunity to develop their career potential and are more motivated to align their performance with the objectives of the organization.

From the perspective of the People CMM, an organization's maturity is derived from the workforce practices routinely performed inside it, and the extent to which these practices have been integrated into an institutionalized process for improving workforce capability. In a mature organization, responsible individuals perform repeatable workforce practices as ordinary and expected requirements of their positions. The more mature an organization, the greater its capability for attracting, developing, and retaining the talent it needs to execute its business.

The People CMM is a process-based model; it assumes that workforce practices are standard organizational processes that can be improved continuously through the same methods that have been used to improve other business processes. The People CMM is constructed from workforce practices and process improvement techniques that have proven effective in many organizations. The only unique characteristic of the People CMM is its staged framework for introducing and steadily improving successful workforce practices.

Any Capability Maturity Model derived from Humphrey's original maturity framework integrates principles from three domains: the targeted domain of processes, total quality management practices, and organizational change. First, a CMM is designed to help an organization adopt best practices in a targeted domain. The CMM for Software targeted software engineering processes, while the People CMM targets workforce management processes. Second, processes in the targeted domain are continuously improved to become more effective and predictable using Total Quality Management concepts

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pioneered by Deming, Juran, Crosby, and others. Third, the CMM constitutes a unique approach to organizational development that introduces these practices in stages (maturity levels) to create a succession of changes in the organization's culture.

Changing an organization's culture through staged improvements to its operating processes is a unique approach to organizational development. These cultural changes provide much of the CMM's power for implementing lasting improvements and distinguish it from other quality and process improvement standards. Although many process standards can transform an organization's culture, few include a roadmap for implementation. Consequently, organizations often fail to implement the standard effectively because they attempt to implement too much too soon and do not lay the right foundation of practices.

The culture of an organization is reflected in the shared values and resulting patterns of behavior that characterize interactions among its members. Successful improvement programs guided by the People CMM change the fundamental attributes of its culture—its practices and behaviors. As an organization adopts the practices that satisfy the goals of the People CMM's process areas, it establishes the shared patterns of behavior that underlie a culture of professionalism dedicated to continuous improvement. Not surprisingly, most organizations report dramatic cultural changes as they progress through the People CMM's maturity levels.

2.2 Maturity Levels in the People CMM

A capability maturity model (CMM) is constructed from the essential practices of one or more domains of organizational process. The People CMM concerns the domain of workforce management and development. A CMM describes an evolutionary improvement path from an ad hoc, immature process to a disciplined, mature process with improved quality and effectiveness.

Capability Maturity Model (CMM)	A capability maturity model is an evolutionary roadmap for implementing the vital practices from one or more domains of organizational process (see Appendix C for definitions of terms).
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All CMMs are constructed with five levels of maturity. A maturity level is an evolutionary plateau at which one or more domains of the organization's processes have been transformed to achieve a new level of organizational capability. Thus, an organization achieves a new level of maturity when a system of practices has been established or transformed to provide capabilities and results the organization did not have at the previous level. The method of transformation is different at each level, and requires capabilities established at earlier levels. Consequently, each maturity level provides a foundation of practices on which practices at subsequent maturity levels can be built. In order to be a true CMM, the maturity framework underlying a model must use the principles established in Humphrey's maturity framework for transforming the organization at each level.

The People CMM applies the principles of Humphrey's maturity framework to the domain of workforce practices. Each of the People CMM's five maturity levels represents

Maturity Level	A maturity level represents a new level of organizational capability created by the transformation of one or more domains of an organization's processes.
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a different level of organizational capability for managing and developing the workforce. Each maturity level provides a layer in the foundation for continuous improvement and equips the organization with increasingly powerful tools for developing the capability of its workforce. The nature of the transformation imposed on the organization's workforce practices to achieve each level of maturity is depicted in Figure 2.1.

2.3 Behavioral Characteristics of Maturity Levels

The People CMM stages the implementation of increasingly sophisticated workforce practices through these maturity levels. With the exception of the Initial Level, each maturity level is characterized by a set of interrelated practices in critical areas of workforce management. When institutionalized and performed with appropriate regularity, these workforce practices create new capabilities within the organization for managing and developing its workforce.

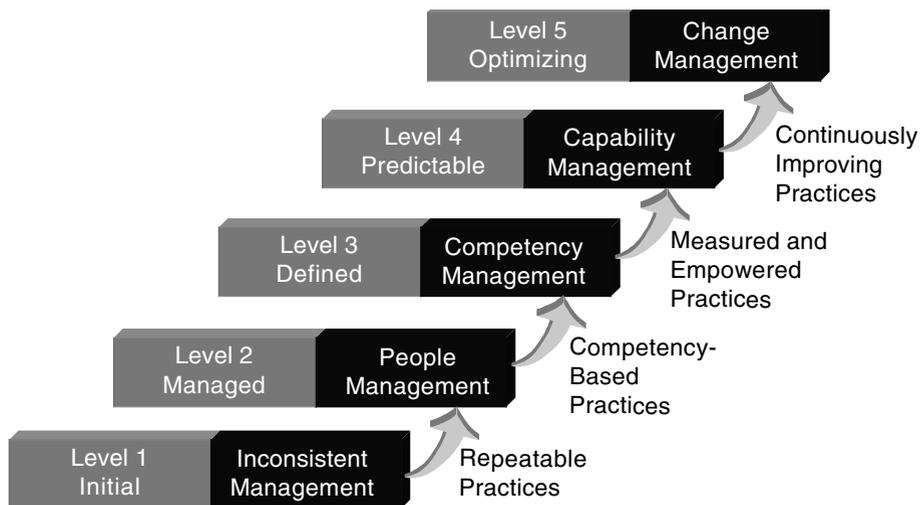


FIGURE 2.1

The five maturity levels of the People CMM

Source: Adapted from Humphrey [1989] and Carnegie Mellon University [1995] with permission.

2.3.1 The Initial Level: Maturity Level 1

Organizations at the Initial Level of maturity usually have difficulty retaining talented individuals. Even though many low-maturity organizations complain about a talent shortage, the inconsistency of their actions belies whether they actually believe it [Rothman 01]. Low-maturity organizations are poorly equipped to respond to talent shortages with anything other than slogans and exhortations. Despite the importance of talent, workforce practices in low-maturity organizations are often ad hoc and inconsistent. In some areas, the organization has not defined workforce practices, and, in other areas, it has not trained responsible individuals to perform the practices that exist. Organizations at the Initial Level typically exhibit four characteristics:

1. Inconsistency in performing practices
2. Displacement of responsibility
3. Ritualistic practices
4. An emotionally detached workforce

Generally managers and supervisors in low-maturity organizations are ill prepared to perform their workforce responsibilities. Their management training is sparse and, when provided, tends to cover only those workforce practices with the greatest legal sensitivity. The organization may typically provide forms for guiding workforce activities such as performance appraisals or position requisitions. However, too often little guidance or training is offered for conducting the activities supported by these forms. Consequently, managers are left to their own devices in most areas of workforce management.

Low-maturity organizations implicitly assume that management skill is either innate or is acquired by observing other managers. However, if managers are inconsistent in managing their people, nascent managers will be learning from inconsistent role models. Management capability should ultimately be defined as a competency, just like other critical skill sets that are required by the organization. However, in launching People CMM-based improvements, managers must be held accountable for performing basic workforce practices even though their personal methods for performing them may differ.

Since low-maturity organizations rarely clarify the responsibilities of managers, inconsistencies are to be expected. Consequently, the way people are treated depends largely on personal orientation, experience, and the individual “people skills” of their managers, supervisors, or team leaders. Although some managers perform their workforce responsibilities diligently, others perform some workforce activities with little forethought and ignore other responsibilities altogether. Studies have consistently shown that one of the major causes for voluntary turnover is related to individuals’ relationships with their managers or supervisors [Buckingham 99].

Managers in low-maturity organizations rarely share a common vision about the fundamental responsibilities of management. They perceive management to be about producing results, not about producing people who produce results. Although managers in low-maturity organizations accept responsibility for the performance of their unit, many do so without understanding how to manage the collective performance of those in the unit. In particular, they often lack skill and place little emphasis on evaluating and improving the capability and performance of people who report to them.

Many managers in low-maturity organizations consider workforce activities to be administrivia—something less than the real work of managers. As a consequence of this attitude, workforce activities such as performance appraisals and job candidate interviews are often performed hastily without adequate preparation. Responsibility for other workforce practices such as recruiting for open positions and identifying training needs are displaced to Human Resources or other staff groups. This displacement reflects a refusal to accept personal responsibility for the capability of the unit or the people in it. These actions are characteristic of managers who have not been properly prepared for their responsibilities in managing people.

If an organization does not establish clear policies for managing its workforce, it should not be surprised when some managers hold attitudes more characteristic of an era when unskilled workers were considered interchangeable. Although these attitudes are counterproductive in knowledge-intensive organizations, many managers have come from educational environments where they focused intently on developing their own skills and were not rewarded for developing the skills of others. From the perspective of the People CMM, individuals own responsibility for developing their knowledge and skills. However, managers own responsibility for ensuring that the people in their unit have the skills required to perform their work and for providing opportunities to develop these skills.

In immature organizations, many workforce practices are performed with little or no analysis of their impact. Recruiting campaigns, classroom training, and bonuses are among the many practices that are performed more as a ritual of organizational life than as processes that have been designed to achieve specific and measurable results. In the worst case, the failure to evaluate workforce practices ensures the failure to detect occasions when their impact is counterproductive to their intended effect. Consequently, ritualism can be as damaging to organizational effectiveness as inconsistency.

When an organization fails to proactively develop its workforce, career-oriented people pursue their own agendas. Mediocre performance and high turnover are typical when organizations provide few financial or career incentives for individuals to align themselves with the organization's business objectives. Loyalty declines when individuals do not perceive the organization to be a vehicle by which they will achieve their career aspirations. In these circumstances individuals perceive the organization as an opportunity for developing specific skills that, once developed, will be used to pursue career opportunities elsewhere.

Constant churn in the workforce diminishes its capability. Although some turnover, or voluntary attrition, may be necessary or even beneficial, high turnover limits the level of skill available in the workforce, thereby limiting an organization's ability to improve its performance. Improvement programs guided by the People CMM are often initiated when an organization faces a talent shortage exacerbated by an inability to attract or retain talented individuals. The first step in changing this state of affairs is to get managers to take responsibility for the capability and development of those who report to them.

2.3.2 The Managed Level: Maturity Level 2

The workforce practices implemented at the Managed Level focus on activities at the unit level. The first step toward improving the capability of the workforce is to get managers

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to take workforce activities as high-priority responsibilities of their job. They must accept personal responsibility for the performance and development of those who perform the unit's work. The practices implemented at Maturity Level 2 focus a manager's attention on unit-level issues such as staffing, coordinating commitments, providing resources, managing performance, developing skills, and making compensation decisions. Building a solid foundation of workforce practices in each unit provides the bedrock on which more sophisticated workforce practices can be implemented at higher levels of maturity.

An important reason to concentrate initially on practices at the unit level is founded on the frequent failure of organization-wide improvement programs. These programs often fail because they were thrust on an unprepared management team. That is, managers were struggling with problems that were not addressed by organizational changes. They often lacked the experience and skill needed to implement sophisticated practices. Consequently, Maturity Level 2 focuses on establishing basic practices in units that address immediate problems and prepare managers to implement more sophisticated practices at higher levels. It is difficult to implement organization-wide practices if managers are not performing the basic workforce practices required to manage their units.

Focusing at the unit level first also establishes a foundation in managing performance that can be enhanced with more sophisticated practices at higher levels. If people are unable to perform their assigned work, sophisticated workforce practices will be of little benefit to individuals or the organization. In a Maturity Level 2 organization, managers are vigilant for problems that hinder performance in their units. Frequent problems that keep people from performing effectively in low-maturity organizations include:

- Work overload
- Environmental distractions
- Unclear performance objectives or feedback
- Lack of relevant knowledge or skill
- Poor communication
- Low morale

The effort to ensure that workforce practices are performed in each unit begins when executive management commits the organization to continuously improve the knowledge, skills, motivation, and performance of its workforce. Executive management manifests these commitments in policies and provides the resources needed to support unit-level implementation of basic workforce practices. Executive management reinforces this commitment by performing basic workforce practices with their immediate reports and by subsequently holding all managers accountable for the performance of workforce practices in their respective units.

Through policies and accountability, executive management communicates that managers are to accept personal responsibility for ensuring that workforce practices are implemented effectively in their units. Individuals responsible for performing workforce practices are expected to develop repeatable methods for activities such as interviewing job candidates or providing performance feedback. Although managers may perform workforce activities differently, people in a unit are able to develop consistent expectations about how they will be treated. In addition, the regularity with which practices are

performed in each unit, regardless of the method or style, is the first step in creating greater consistency across the organization.

In applying the People CMM, it is important to distinguish between management and managers. There are responsibilities that need to be managed and there are people called managers, but there is no required one-to-one mapping between them. Although we often refer to “managers” in describing responsibilities for workforce practices at Maturity Level 2, these practices could be performed by team leaders, human resources specialists, trainers, peers, or others depending on how responsibilities are allocated within the organization. At any level of maturity, some, perhaps many, workforce practices may be performed by individuals or groups who are not “managers.” As the organization matures beyond Maturity Level 2, an increasing number of workforce practices will be performed by someone other than a manager.

As an organization achieves Maturity Level 2, units become stable environments for performing work. Units are able to balance their commitments with available resources. They can manage their skill needs, both through acquiring people with needed skills and through developing the skills of those already in the unit. Managers are focused on managing individual performance and coordinating individual contributions into effective unit performance. At Maturity Level 2, an organization’s capability for performing work is best characterized by the capability of units to meet commitments. This capability is achieved by ensuring that people have the skills needed to perform their assigned work and that performance is regularly discussed to identify actions that can improve it.

One of the first benefits organizations experience when they implement improvements guided by the People CMM is a reduction in voluntary turnover. At Maturity Level 2, the People CMM addresses one of the most frequent causes of turnover—poor relations with the immediate supervisor. When people begin to see a more rational work environment emerge in their unit, their motivation to stay with the organization is enhanced. As their development needs are addressed, they begin to see the organization as a vehicle through which they can achieve their career objectives.

2.3.3 The Defined Level: Maturity Level 3

Organizations at the Managed Level find that, although they are performing basic workforce practices, there is inconsistency in how these practices are performed across units and little synergy across the organization. The organization misses opportunities to standardize workforce practices because the common knowledge and skills necessary to conduct its business activities have not been identified. At Maturity Level 2, units are identifying critical skills to determine qualifications for open positions, evaluate training needs, and provide performance feedback. However, there is no requirement at Maturity Level 2 for identifying common attributes among these skills across units or for determining the practices that are most effective in developing them.

Once a foundation of basic workforce practices has been established in the units, the next step is for the organization to develop an organization-wide infrastructure building on these practices that ties the capability of the workforce to strategic business objectives. The primary objective of the Defined Level is to help an organization gain a competitive advantage by developing the various competencies that must be combined in its workforce

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to accomplish its business activities. These workforce competencies represent the critical pillars that support the strategic business plan; their absence poses a severe risk to strategic business objectives. In tying workforce competencies to current and future business objectives, the improved workforce practices implemented at Maturity Level 3 become critical enablers of business strategy.

The concept of workforce competencies implemented in the People CMM differs from the concept of “core competency” popularized by Prahalad and Hamel [Pralhad 90]. *Core competency* refers to an organization’s combination of technology and production skills that create its products and services and provide its competitive advantage in the marketplace. In the People CMM, workforce competencies reside one level of abstraction below an organization’s core competency, as shown in Figure 2.2. Each *workforce competency* represents a distinct integration of the *knowledge, skills, and process abilities* required to perform some of the business activities that contribute to an organization’s core competency. The range of workforce competencies an organization must integrate depends on the breadth and type of business activities that comprise its core competencies. Therefore, these workforce competencies are a strategic underpinning of the organization’s core competencies.

By defining process abilities as a component of a workforce competency, the People CMM becomes linked with the process frameworks established in other CMMs and with other process-based methods, such as business process reengineering. A process ability is demonstrated by performing the competency-based processes appropriate for someone at an individual’s level of development in the workforce competency. To define the process abilities incorporated in each workforce competency, the organization defines the competency-based processes that an individual in each workforce competency would

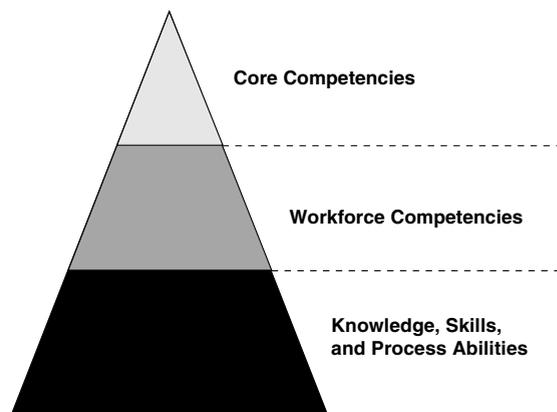


FIGURE 2.2
Hierarchy of competency abstractions

be expected to perform in accomplishing his or her committed work. Within a workforce competency, a competency-based process defines how individuals apply their knowledge, perform their skills, and apply their process abilities in the context of the organization's defined work processes.

At Maturity Level 3, the organization builds an organization-wide framework of workforce competencies that establishes the architecture of the organization's workforce. Each workforce competency is an element of the workforce architecture, and dependencies among competency-based processes describe how these architectural elements interact. Thus, the architecture of the workforce must become an element of the strategic business plan. Workforce practices become mechanisms through which this architecture is continually realigned with changes in business objectives. The architecture of the organization's workforce must evolve as business conditions and technologies change.

Because workforce competencies are strategic, the organization must develop strategic workforce plans for ensuring the required capability in each of its current or anticipated workforce competencies. These plans identify the actions to be taken in acquiring and developing the level of talent needed in each workforce competency. The People CMM makes no assumption about whether the organization sustains these workforce competencies internally or acquires them through partnerships, alliances, independent contracting, or outsourcing.

The members of the organization's workforce who share the knowledge, skills, and process abilities of a particular workforce competency constitute a competency community. The aggregated level of knowledge, skills, and process abilities available in a competency community determines an organization's capability in that workforce competency. The capability of an organization's business processes is, in part, determined by the extent to which competency communities can translate their collective knowledge, skills, and process abilities into work performance. Maturity Level 3 establishes the infrastructure for defining measures of capability, in preparation for capability being quantitatively managed at Maturity Level 4.

At the Defined Level, the organization adapts its workforce practices to its business needs by focusing them on motivating and enabling development in its workforce competencies. Once workforce competencies are defined, training and development practices can be more systematically focused on developing the knowledge, skills, and process abilities that compose them. Further, the existing experience in the workforce can be organized to accelerate the development of workforce competencies of people of lesser skill and experience. Graduated career opportunities are defined around increasing levels of capability in workforce competencies. The graduated career opportunities motivate and guide development of individuals. The organization's staffing, performance management, compensation, and other workforce practices are adapted to motivate and support development in workforce competencies.

When the processes to be performed by each workforce competency are defined, the organization has a new foundation for developing workgroups. Competency-based processes form a basis for defining workgroup roles and operating processes. Rather than relying only on the interpersonal coordination skills developed at Maturity Level 2, workgroups can now organize themselves by tailoring and applying standard competency-based processes. The ability to use defined processes simplifies coordination in the

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workgroup, since it no longer rests solely on the interpersonal skills of group members to determine how to manage their mutual dependencies.

Competent professionals demand a level of autonomy in performing their work. To use the abilities of competent professionals best, the organization must create an environment that involves people in decisions about their business activities. Decision-making processes are adjusted to maximize the level of competency applied to decisions, while shortening the time required to make them. Individuals and workgroups are given the business and performance information they need to make competent decisions. A participatory culture enables an organization to gain maximum benefit from the capability of its workforce competencies while establishing the environment necessary for empowering workgroups.

A common organizational culture typically develops as the organization achieves the Defined Level. This culture is best described as one of professionalism, since it is built from common understanding of the knowledge and skills that need to be developed to achieve superior levels of performance and a definition of the competency-based processes that such individuals perform. Since these workforce competencies are strategic to the business, the organization reinforces their importance by developing and rewarding them. As a result, the entire workforce begins to share responsibility for developing increasing levels of capability in the organization's workforce competencies. The workforce practices that were implemented at Maturity Level 2 are now standardized and adapted to encourage and reward growth in the organization's workforce competencies.

2.3.4 The Predictable Level: Maturity Level 4

An organization at the Defined Level has established an organizational framework for developing its workforce. At the Predictable Level, the organization manages and exploits the capability created by its framework of workforce competencies. This framework is sustained through formal mentoring activities. The organization is now able to manage its capability and performance quantitatively. The organization is able to predict its capability for performing work because it can quantify the capability of its workforce and of the competency-based processes they use in performing their assignments.

There are at least three ways in which the framework of workforce competencies enables the organization to more fully use the capabilities of its workforce. First, when competent people perform their assignments using proven competency-based processes, management trusts the results they produce. This trust enables the organization to preserve the results of performing competency-based processes and develop them as organizational assets to be reused by others. In essence, people trust the asset because they trust the methods through which it was produced. When these assets are created and used effectively, learning spreads rapidly through the organization and productivity rises when reuse replaces redevelopment.

Second, this trust also gives managers the confidence they need to empower workgroups. Managers will transfer responsibility and authority for committed work into workgroups only if they believe the members of the workgroup are competent to perform the work and use processes that have been proven effective. When the organization achieves

Maturity Level 3, the conditions required for empowerment—competent people, effective processes, and a participatory environment—are established. In achieving Maturity Level 4, management senses less risk in empowering workgroups and is willing to delegate increasingly greater levels of authority for managing day-to-day operations and for performing some of their own workforce practices. Increasingly free of managing operational details, managers at Maturity Level 4 are able to turn their attention to more strategic issues.

Third, when members of each workforce competency community have mastered their competency-based processes, the organization is able to integrate different competency-based processes into a single multidisciplinary process. At Maturity Level 3, individuals performing different competency-based processes manage their mutual dependencies by defining points of coordination. However, their competency-based work is performed largely in isolation, independent of each other's competency-based processes. However, when competency-based processes have been institutionalized, the organization can begin to integrate different competency-based processes into a multidisciplinary process that better integrates the work of several workforce competencies. An example would be the integration of software and hardware design processes into a single product design process in which the different competency-based processes are interwoven at every point where they share a potential dependency. Such multidisciplinary processes have proven to accelerate business results.

In addition to exploiting the possibilities enabled by the competency framework, the organization begins to manage its capability quantitatively. Within each unit or workgroup, the performance of competency-based processes most critical for accomplishing business objectives is measured. These measures are used to establish process performance baselines that can be used to manage competency-based processes and assess the need for corrective action. The creation and use of these baselines and associated measures is similar to the methods that underlie Six Sigma programs [Harry 00, Pande 00]. Although Six Sigma techniques can be used at any level of maturity, the full sophistication of a Six Sigma approach is best enabled at Maturity Level 4. Members of a competency community have immediate data for evaluating their performance and deciding on the need for corrective actions. The immediate availability of process performance data also contributes to the rationale for empowering workgroups to manage their business activities.

The organization uses the data generated by competency-based processes to establish process capability baselines for its critical competency-based processes. These baselines can be used for planning, for targeting improvements, and for predicting the organization's capacity for work. The organization evaluates the impact of workforce practices and activities on the capability of competency-based processes and takes corrective action when necessary. Process capability baselines and associated analyses are used as inputs for workforce planning.

The combined availability of workforce capability baselines and process capability baselines for competency-based processes enables both unit and organizational performance to become more predictable. These data allow management to make more accurate predictions about performance and better decisions about tradeoffs involving workforce capability or process performance issues. The quantitative management capabilities

implemented at Maturity Level 4 provide management with better input for strategic decisions, while encouraging delegation of operational details to people close to the processes.

2.3.5 The Optimizing Level: Maturity Level 5

At the Optimizing Level, the entire organization is focused on continual improvement. These improvements are made to the capability of individuals and workgroups, to the performance of competency-based processes, and to workforce practices and activities. The organization uses the results of the quantitative management activities established at Maturity Level 4 to guide improvements at Maturity Level 5. Maturity Level 5 organizations treat change management as an ordinary business process to be performed in an orderly way on a regular basis.

Although several individuals may be performing identical competency-based processes, they frequently exhibit individual differences in the methods and work styles they use to perform their assignments. At Maturity Level 5, individuals are encouraged to make continuous improvements to their personal work processes by analyzing their work and making necessary process enhancements. Similarly, workgroups are composed of individuals who have personalized work processes. To improve the capability of the workgroup, each person's work processes must be integrated into an effective operating procedure for the workgroup. Improvements at the individual level should be integrated into improvements in the workgroup's operating process. Mentors and coaches can be provided to guide improvements at both the individual and workgroup levels. Simultaneously, the organization continually seeks methods for improving the capability of its competency-based processes.

Although individuals and workgroups continually improve their performance, the organization must be vigilant to ensure that performance at all levels remains aligned with organizational objectives. Thus, individual performance must be aligned with the performance objectives of the workgroup and unit. Units must ensure their performance is aligned with the objectives of the organization. At Maturity Level 5, the process performance data collected across the organization is evaluated to detect instances of misalignment. Further, the impact of workforce practices and activities is evaluated to ensure that they encourage rather than discourage alignment. Corrective action is taken to realign performance objectives and results when necessary.

Inputs for potential improvements to workforce practices come from many sources. They can come from lessons learned in making improvements to the workforce activities in a unit, from suggestions by the workforce, or from the results of quantitative management activities. The organization continually evaluates the latest developments in workforce practices and technologies to identify those developments with the potential to contribute to the organization's improvement objectives. Data on the effectiveness of workforce practices that emerged from quantitative management activities are used to analyze potential performance improvements from innovative workforce practices or proposed changes to existing practices. Innovative practices that demonstrate the greatest potential for improvement are identified and evaluated in trial applications. If they prove effective, they are deployed throughout the organization.

The workforce capability of Maturity Level 5 organizations is continually improving. This improvement occurs through both incremental advances in existing workforce practices and adoption of innovative practices and technologies that might be expected to have a dramatic impact. The culture created in an organization routinely working at the Optimizing Level is one in which everyone strives to improve his or her own capability, and contributes to improvements in the performance of the workgroup, the unit, and the organization. Workforce practices are honed to support a culture of performance excellence.

